



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF COMMENTS  
2009 CHILDCARE DEVELOPMENT FUND STATE PLAN PUBLIC HEARINGS  
FOR THE 2010-2011 CCDF STATE PLAN**

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Beginning April 28, 2009 through May 6, 2009, seven childcare public hearings were held throughout the State of Georgia to hear comments from the general public on the State of Georgia Childcare and Development Fund State Plan, and its highlights. The hearings were held in the following cities, and includes the date and number of participants who signed-in: Savannah 4/28/09- 8 participants; Macon 4/29/09- 13 participants; Albany 4/30/09-16 participants; Columbus 5/1/09-4 participants; Norcross 5/4/09-8 participants; Augusta 5/5/09-7 participants; Decatur 5/6/09- 22 participants. The hearings were conducted by Wise Minds Consulting, Inc. and attended by representatives from the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR), Bright From the Start, Child Care Resource and Referral Centers (CCR&R), as well as parents, educators, childcare providers, and other childcare advocates.

The comments and questions from participants are listed in this document and grouped by comment category. Some individual comments may contain several categorical comments listed in one; therefore, those comments have been broken into their respective category by paragraph. For the full transcript of each hearing, please see the official documents compiled by Court Reporters for each hearing. These documents are also enclosed with this report. Comments from state officials and agency representatives may also be found in the individual hearing reports and are not included in this summary of comments from the public.

**Comment Categories:**

Childcare Reference and Referral	Onsite Technical Assistance
Disaster/Contingency Plan	Pre-K/Infant & Toddler Programs
Disposable Wages and Assessment Fees	Program Requirements
Fraud	Program/Plan Structure and Organization
Funds Administration	Recertification Notification
Health & Safety Requirements	Reduction of Hours
Improper Payments	Resources
Maternity Leave	TANF Program Process
Online Inquiry System	Training and Development
Online Inquiry for Complaints	Transportation

**Key:**

<b>ALB</b> =Albany	<b>AUG</b> =Augusta	<b>COL</b> =Columbus
<b>DEC</b> =Decatur	<b>MAC</b> =Macon	<b>NOR</b> =Norcross
<b>SAV</b> =Savannah		

Note: Participants were in attendance for COL and SAV, but no comments are listed for the record

## **CHILD CARE REFERENCE AND REFERRAL**

### **DEC**

**BILLIE WEBB:** One comment. Last year when I read the plan and went through it and reviewed it, one thing that stood out in my mind was the money that was going to notify the families of what services were available. For example, a family goes to Sam's Street, they're looking for child care, they call me and they ask me about my services, and nine times out of ten if I call -- if I ask them how did you find out about Kid's Corner, which is my center, most times they're using their Atlanta Child Care Guide, which is not supported by this money, and this is a person that works in our community. She is physically handicapped so I know it's a challenge. She goes in and out of every center updating our information, updating our phone numbers, putting it in the magazines, placing those magazines at Wal-Mart, Sam's St, Kroger, churches in our community, and most of the time when families are calling us inquiring about services, that's the guide that they're using. They're not using, for whatever reason, they're not using the quality care magazine that they put out most of the time -- it's the Atlanta Child Care Guide that's being using and I think the publisher is Christy Priester, is the publisher of that guide, and she publishes it for DeKalb, Fulton and Clayton County. So she covers a lot of ground and that's the comment. Thank you.

## **DISASTER/CONTINGENCY PLAN**

### **ALB**

**GERALD FIGGINS:** Okay. The other thing that I would like to make a comment on is regarding, and I didn't see it there, a contingency plan in case we get to another extreme economical crisis versus waiting two years for the reduced hours like this. We need a plan. We should be able to have a contingency plan dealing with the DHR, the local DHR or whatever so that we can call or do something. If we need to actually make a change in the hours versus waiting two years. Because again, it has hit hard here in Albany for the past year or so or year-and-a-half. Like I said, I was screaming loudly to try to get some of the reviews off the wall.

### **NOR**

**HEIDI KLOMP:** This is Heidi Klomp again. I know that on Page 7 it says that the program is not responsible for helping to find child care for the parents or guardians, however, in the event of a disaster I think that the program should be responsible in helping parents find proper child care and the plan needs to be developed and I think this would be an important factor to put in, especially since children who've been through a natural disaster will probably need a special type of child care. I think that's very important to consider in developing the plan.

## **DISPOSABLE WAGES AND ASSESSMENT FEES**

### **ALB**

**ALMA NOBLE:** My name is Alma A-L-M-A N-O-B-L-E. Noble. My question concerns, and like I say, I don't know if this is the forum for this, but in determining the funds that a family actually has, the allowable disposable wages that are left after the work is determined, the parents' assessment fees for child care. Families are assessed. At one time the fees were divided, you know. If there were four children in the family and the fee is, let's say \$30, each one might have had, you know, an equal amount to pay. But now they are assessing fees sometimes on one child. So, a

family that is experiencing economic distress will not send that particular child and the other children will come just because they can't afford it. And I guess I would like to see it returned where it might be evenly distributed among the children in the family and then when they are calculating the disposable wages, as I understand it, car payments and car insurance are not included.

## **FRAUD**

### **NOR**

**HEIDI KLOMP:** Also, on Page 12 it was mentioned, I think it's great you guys want to cut down on fraud, but right now there's about 2.9 percent fraud rate -- it said in one particular study that was done -- and it said that there would be monthly specialized meetings for child care providers. And so I feel that would kind of be throwing money away to be having monthly meetings for an issue that isn't quite as large. And also on that same page it said there would be funding for two staff positions to help combat fraud and again, I don't think it would be costs effective to be paying two salaries for -- to try to combat the fraud rate that's only about 2.9 percent. I don't think it's costs efficient, but overall I think it's great. The fraud rate seems to be low. I think it's a good program from what I could tell.

## **FUNDS ADMINISTRATION**

### **AUG**

**SONYA LEE:** Sonya Lee, S-O-N-Y-A, last name Lee, L-E-E. I am just wondering are there funds available now for child care help? There's many people that need child care and we keep, you know, getting that there's none available. So that's my question. Thank you.

### **DEC**

**AUDREY COLLIER:** My name is Audrey Collier, A-U-D-R-E-Y, C-O-L-L-I-E-R (spelling) and I'm with Scottdale Childhood Development Center, which is a private nonprofit organization and Billie really spoke for a lot of us. Even though we're private nonprofit, we may be eligible to get some funding that other private centers may not. Programs like ours are still struggling. So, I remember when I got into this business over twenty-eight years ago, we had contracts with DFACS for child care. I still believe in parents' choices but sometimes some organizations aren't able to get their set of tools with the CAPS dollars so we could use more funding from this money to do direct contract services with some organizations.

**AUDREY COLLIER:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) This is more of a comment. I know that these type hearings are held annually every year throughout the State of Georgia but I guess we would like to know what will Georgia be doing with the stimulus dollars that will be coming into the state for early care and education.

### **NOR**

**HEIDI KLOMP:** My name is Heidi Klomp, H-E-I-D-I, K-L-O-M-P (spelling). On Page 95 it's talking about health and how all the children have to be immunized and so I was wondering if children would be excluded or denied program if they were not immunized, because if you can't afford child care you probably can't afford all the immunizations so I think that's an issue. Also, on

Page 6, there's the amount of five-million dollars will be going towards the administration and yes, it's not more than five percent of the total budget but it's close to it, so where's all that money go. Can we cut any costs there, especially with the economy, we want every penny possible going to help provide child care.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

### **ALB**

**RODNEY MORRIS:** My name is Rodney Morris. R-O-D-N-E-Y M-O-R-R-I-S. First of all, I would like to commend this State's efforts. Mr. Pugh, I would like to acknowledge you and Ms. Washington and everybody that is involved with this plan. I am glad to know that there will be some things that are addressed. I am glad to see that there is a plan for our children. As to that, we are concerned about child care. So, I have no complaints but concerns.

I would like to say that if I had to say what is the most vital to our children, I would have to say that it is their safety and health. And when I say that, I was looking at strengthening the last one. That is strengthening guidelines to ensure health and the safety requirements and that the safety requirements are more effectively enforced. I don't know exactly what happens when it is a matter of confidentiality. And if I could make it clear, I am only saying that there is something that is detrimental to a child's health. We know of these illnesses that are troubling. If I had to mention one, it would be HIV. HIV, AIDS. And if our children are subjected to that. And this says that it is strengthening the guidelines, I would only ask or inquire as to this confidential matter, if it can be enhanced. You know, I am just concerned about that. And the safety of the children.

You know, will there be an avenue that the children can now seek as far as their safety is concerned? And does it mean that? I know that sometimes, things can be difficult. And lastly, I would close to say that if we can with these plans, let's try to not make it more difficult than what it is. And I thank you all for bringing something together for our children because we should be very concerned with these things. I know you have heard this, that our children are our future. Many of us, we really should think about that. What does that truly mean? Our children are our future. That is very vital and whatever strategy or language that we can take. I am so glad, once again, that something is being taken, some action here in Dougherty County. And I guess I will say thank you, Ms. Washington and Mr. Pugh. And I look forward to these plans. Thank you.

**RODNEY MORRIS:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) This is a really a vital matter. I don't know whether or not we could just do it off the record. But I really look forward. I hope you know what I am talking about when I say the child's health. It is a two-year old.

**ALMA NOBLE:** (From the audience.) I just want to ask the gentleman a question. Are the comments directed to DHR?

**ALMA NOBLE:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) I guess that I am trying to determine, because I do have a comment but I don't know if it is appropriate for -- I don't know if this is the group that can do anything about it.

### **AUG**

**LEE BROXTON:** My name is Lee Broxton, L-E-E, B-R-O-X-T-O-N. I have had time to briefly review and I'd like to go online and look more in-depth into it. But the things that are being implemented, they're great. I mean they're good improvements. I can't find any way that of course I would do it better, but the In detail, I like the way that you're going to strengthen the guidelines to

ensure the health and safety requirements. That's a plus. There's always room for improvement there. I believe that there's room for improvement in anything that you do, especially with child care. I work in the public school, so child care is a big part of that. And making it more available to the public, more available and more readily affordable is also a great thing. I would definitely like to submit more comments online after I read through it some more, so if you would allow me to do that, that would be great. Thank you.

## **IMPROPER PAYMENTS**

### **DEC**

**BILLIE WEBB:** I've heard centers' comment about Maximus taking dollars back because there were improper payments and so now they're going back five, six, seven years and you've got to justify why they overpaid you. Well, for a center that's again in a community that's ninety-eight percent free and reduced lunch, that's very difficult, because we're barely keeping our lights on, paying our taxes, I mean just -- I'll give you an example for myself. I've been in business thirteen years and this year I was vandalized five times. I felt just like the lady that was on the news program were they came into the center and stole her food. What else do they want? They came and took my air conditioners, my computers, my telephones and now my insurance company wants to drop me.

It's very frustrating for me because originally I'm from North Carolina. When I go back to North Carolina to -- I'm from Robinson County, North Carolina, the worse county in the State of North Carolina -- the child care providers there receive more in child care assistance subsidized payments than I receive here in Decatur in the metropolitan area, and their taxes is much less than mine. So, it's very difficult for us to continue to be in business because we're barely making enough money to make the ends meet.

### **MAC**

**GINGER BURNETT:** My name is Ginger Burnett, and I work for the Office of Investigative Services for the State of Georgia. I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight. I do have some suggestions I would like to make and comments regarding the use of the CCDF funds. One is that I would like to suggest that under the heading of improper payments -- that's truly what I'm just addressing. What I would like to suggest is that there be in place -- that the funds be used to put in place an annual training program for providers in the State of Georgia.

There are over 4,000 providers, and one of the common things that we hear is they don't really understand the program, and what they are supposed to be doing regarding proper recordkeeping and proper billing practices. So that's what I would like to see some of the funds be used for. And to -- this in turn, would, you know, help cut down on improper payments, thus making more funds available to serve the needy families of Georgia.

Additionally, there is an item that's mentioned here. The funded staff position. There are two state funded positions in OIS exclusively for investigating provider -- suspected child care improper payments, and I would like to suggest that it be increased to six staff persons across the State of Georgia. Currently, there are three that handle the entire State of Georgia. Again, you know, that's for over 4,000 vendors, so that's really all that I have to say. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**LEIGH ANN HENDRIX:** My name Leigh Ann Hendrix. I am one of the investigators that handles -- one of the three that handles the State of Georgia. I do work for the Department of Human Resources. The comment that I have or suggestion that I have is about improper payments. At the bottom of the page on page 12, it talks about using consent agreements, which are legal

documents to repay funds to the state that have been improperly made, and I would like to encourage that process continue and that we have a collaborative of some sort that can work together and try to put that in place. We currently have it for food stamps and TANF in the State of Georgia, and I think that it would work really well if we could do that for the childcare program as well. Thank you.

## **MATERNITY LEAVE**

### **ALB**

**GERALD FIGGINS:** Okay. Secondly, again, I would like to see something in the plan regarding more clarity around maternity leave. I know you could say it is a local child care-type issue, but I really want to understand and be clear on maternity leave issues. Let's say if I help -- And I hope this doesn't happen to you, but let's say I got a couple of children and I am expecting and I work at a job and I go on maternity leave. I go to my case worker ahead of time to let them know what is going on. I get the process set up. I go off and have the baby. I go home or whatever. I come back. Why do you turn me off at the system within two weeks of getting back if I just want to come back to work, say on a Thursday or a Friday of one week and then work a few days the next week? I don't have but four weeks there, so why do I get turned off? Some of this needs, with regard to maternity leave, more clarity on that one.

Also, in case I come back off of maternity leave, how could an agency lose my paperwork and I had no record that I went on maternity leave and wasn't processed in that area? So, some people with maternity leave need you to draw up a plan because there a lot of parents and so forth that have issues regarding maternity leave and so forth. That is a pretty big area, because I have seen several and have heard of several other daycares and I didn't see anything in the plan.

## **ONLINE INQUIRY SYSTEM**

### **DEC**

**ARLESIA MCCULLOUGH:** Good evening. My name is Arlesia McCullough, A-R-L-E-S-I-A, M-C-C-U-L-L-O-U-G-H (spelling) and I'm from McCullough's Creative Children's Center in Atlanta licensed through the State of Georgia in DeKalb County. My main comment -- and I don't know whether this is appropriate or not -- but I have two things I want to comment on those changes. The statement that says develop electronic inquiry screening to complete online paperwork. My thing with that is that the children -- the parents that we have, a lot of them aren't computer literate and they don't have access to computers. And I just would like to go on record saying that in addition to the way that you're doing now it may be okay, but if we convert over to using computers to apply for child care subsidy program then that's going to eliminate a lot of people like low-income parents or people that do not have access to computer. So, I don't know whether -- I read briefly in a book but I don't know whether you're trying to change over completely or if that's just an additional service that will be offered.

### **NOR**

**DONA WINGO:** This is Donna Wingo again. I'm just curious as a new parent if I were to just go online and apply, what is the turnaround time of the entire process? Is there a wait?

## ONLINE INQUIRY FOR COMPLAINTS

### ALB

**GERALD FIGGINS:** Let's see. Is there anything else? Oh, the online inquiry system. The previous forms that deals with inquiry of a parent. I really believe that we can take that to a much higher level or level higher than we have anticipated. You have it in the plan around various complaints. Complaints for parents regarding providers. Complaints that are readily available for the parents to review regarding providers. I just think that we need to study the issues for providers. But there is no one that I have seen, no system that I have seen yet that has readily available complaints regarding the local DHR, although the paperwork that is being accumulated and people rarely see what is going on. Because there have been issues.

**ALMA NOBLE:** (From the audience.) Would you make that plain? I am not understanding you.

**GERALD FIGGINS:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) Okay. What I am saying is the plan is -- This is public, so I am trying to watch what I say. If there are issues regarding your local DHR in the area or certain case workers that you feel are not performing adequately, then how do you complain the intervention to the appropriate people in which I am sure that other parents or providers can have the same issues regarding certain case workers or local DHR which can be viewed by targeting them to be looked at and say, "Hey, we have got a trend going on with the local DHR" or either a case worker. So that needs to be addressed. Because they can impact you severely over paperwork and documents. And the only one really that has helped us out over stuff that has been brought up is Ms. Washington. And that is a fact.

**ALMA NOBLE:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) So, you are saying that if you call down to DHR or DFACS and you are working our services properly and you ask for a supervisor, you are not getting any resolution?

**GERALD FIGGINS:** (3<sup>rd</sup> comment, same category) No, ma'am. No. That is a fact. And if you can put it -- I don't know who you are. So, I don't know how you are assigned, but I will tell you for a fact that we have called DHR and we will have a complaint. I will make this quick. This is a fact. There is a case worker that we have continued to have problems with over time. The second week of October, it wasn't this past year. The second week of October, the parent went in turning over certain pieces of paper. Their paperwork was turned in big-time. My wife called left and right to try to find out what was going on and the mama called left and right. The grandmother called. October went through. Nothing. No returned calls.

All of November went through. No returned phone calls. We are not getting paid. The paperwork had been turned in the second week of October. December came along, no returned phone calls. About three or four days before Christmas, the mother and grandmother came to my office at my day care. She begged me to call somebody. I go, "I don't know who I can call. I have called and I have complained so much two years ago and nothing has been resolved and nothing has been done. I don't know who I can call."

So, finally what I did was I looked in my desk drawer -- and Lord, thank you -- I had Ms. Washington's phone number. I put it away when she gave us her card. I called her on the telephone. By the way, the grandmother said that this was for January and I told her in July that, "I get children when I feel like it." So we are not getting paid. I called Ms. Washington up. I told Ms. Washington, if this continues to happen in which this temp has got seven kids that falls to a case worker, that she will put us out of business by withholding the paperwork. I called Ms.

Washington. And Ms. Washington had to talk to the grandmother. In three or four days, it got worked out and from then on, it got resolved. I called Ms. Washington up. I love Ms. Washington. And that is a fact.

**ALMA NOBLE:** (3rd comment, same category) But sir, according to DHR guidelines, when they send you that Form 62 or whatever and tell you to discontinue day care at a certain time or they are not responsible, I mean, isn't that your responsibility as a business owner to adhere to their policies, as they say, for some reason that a person is not eligible, whether they have not turned in their paperwork or whatever? Then you have to follow their guidelines. And you know, we sympathize with our parents and we tell them. But DHR sets a maximum and if their names are not on their role and if we are told that there is something that a parent hasn't done, then you are responsible for that childcare until we approve it.

## **ONSITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

### **MAC**

**LISA BLEDSOE:** Thank you. My name is Lisa Bledsoe. L-I-S-A, B-L-E-D-S-O-E (spelling). I am in quality care for children, one of the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies across the State of Georgia. One of the things that we would like to see some of the CCDF dollars go to is to help provide more on-site technical assistance to informal care providers.

In the central Georgia area, we are lucky enough to be able to go out and provide on-site personal assistance to all of our providers, because we don't have that many in our area, but we do know that some of the larger areas, like up in the metro area and up in the northwest Georgia area, they are not quite so fortunate to be able to go out there, so if more funding was provided to help the CCR&Rs provide technical assistance or for DHR to provide people on staff to provide technical assistance, we could improve the health and safety standards of the children who are in informal care. Thank you.

## **PRE-K/ INFANT & TODDLER PROGRAMS**

### **DEC**

**MONICA WILLIAMS:** Hello, my name is Monica Williams and I am the director of the Alpha Academy and Child Care Center. What I would like to see is a Georgia pre-K program, which is a ten-month program offered -- those pre-K children at the end of May -- continuing funding to stay in that center or whichever center they choose to participate in the summer program, which has a variety of activities, including academics, and would help prepare them or to continue the preparation process to kindergarten. Thank you.

**BILLIE WEBB:** I was just thinking about something. There was some things that Georgia did that were great, and it was a different time, but with all the brain research sometimes we forget about the importance of our infant and toddler programs, and at one point, a couple of years ago, probably eight, there were money put into programs for infants and toddlers, and I thought it was a great initiative, because it allowed programs to receive those things that we really needed to be effective with infant and toddlers, materials, cribs, new rugs on the floor, infant and toddler playgrounds, because most of the times our playgrounds aren't conducive to our preschooler and our afterschoolers, and we really don't think about the importance of having a separate area for the



infants and toddlers, and eight years ago they had a lot of classes on brain research, so that was one thought, infant and toddler initiatives.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **ALB**

**ALMA NOBLE:** Okay. Like I had a parent last week that had 29.5 hours and their child care was terminated because she didn't get 30. It seems that they would let her keep her child care. I think sometimes like at the Department of Labor where people have filed for Unemployment in six quarters rather than nine. Part-time people can now draw Employment. And these concessions are being made with some agencies. Some concessions are common-sense reasoning that needs to take place with child care workers who are making these decisions. Because if you can only get your 29.4 hours, then that family is headed for economic destruction. And that is all I need to say about that.

## **PROGRAM/PLAN STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION**

### **ALB**

**GERALD FIGGINS:** Also, the plan, you mentioned several attachments. I don't see all of the attachments that are listed. I don't know if they have put them in a document that we can get a hold of or see. I think this is something that has been put out like a child care manual. I would like to get my hands on the child care manual so I can see what is in it. I guess the question that I would like to be answered is that a child care manual that is used by case workers and so forth, if there is a document or manual that I can get and have it or be provided it. Also I would like to have it so that if an issue comes up, I can read the rule verification and so forth. Because that is not in the packet at this time. If it is not in there, then we need to be able to get the document where we can find it and so forth.

As far as an organizational chart, the structure from the hierarchy on down, what their role capacity and their profession and job title and so forth, I guess that is already in the plan. I know that you got some people listed and so forth, but a true organizational chart would be somewhat appreciated. And even if it can be broken down into certain counties and so forth and who goes in those counties and so forth or the areas or regional supervisors or whatever. But there needs to be information about who to contact and what to do if we should get into a bind. And I would like to say on the record publicly to individuals out there and to providers out there, if you don't know, like I said, get to know Ms. Washington. I would like to thank you, Ms. Washington, for helping us with our day care. So she is out there and I would recommend you get Ms. Washington's phone number or card. Get to know her because, as I say, I love her to death and I can't say enough. She has been a hundred percent a team player. I know she has covered for things that I do. I have gotten no help from no one else on things that were simple. And she listened and she went to work. And I will tell you if you have got an issue about a problem, get her phone number. Get Ms. Washington's number. It is the only one you need.

**SORAYA. MILLER:** Good evening. My name is Soraya Miller. That is S-O-R-A-Y-A. Miller, M-I-L-L-E-R. And I am the director here for the Child Care Resources Referral, Southwest Georgia. I just wanted to go on record saying that once I read of the new proposed plan, I was pleased to see that there was more information included. I was also frustrated a little bit, as Mr. Figgins was, in not being able to find the attachments. But I am sure that problem will be corrected.

There did seem to be a plethora of more explanation around standards and how they are being worked on with the State to be aligned and more information on the Pre-K and how the professionals and organizations and entities and agencies around the State and representatives who are all on the same page for improving the lives of children and families. They have worked hard to align those standards. There is more information on activities that they have been engaged in, I thought, and public policy and limitation and more about evaluation and rules changes. And some of the proposed changes that you see on the list here were, I believe, a result of committees put together such as the State Cap Advisory Panel.

To me, it says that the State listens. It is composed of citizens and representatives that work for children and they do listen to comments. I think some of you wouldn't be here if they didn't listen to those comments, and those comments are appreciated. It was good to read more information. It shows that the system is being strengthened. Of course there are problems and of course there are issues and concerns, but there is more attention.

It just came out to me in the State plan that things are changing. The system is changing and there are some things that are being improved about it. And there is a cohesiveness, I thought, around the representatives in the State that work for children and there is just more information overall. When you read the plan, you get a better feel and a better explanation and there were some things that were more clearly laid out. For anyone in the general public who picks up the State plan and reads it, it is more understandable this year. Thank you.

## **DEC**

**BILLIE WEBB:** Good afternoon. My name is Billie Webb, B-I-L-L-I-E, W-E-B-B (spelling) and I'm a child care center owner director in Decatur, Georgia and I just have a couple of comments about the Plan.

One, I'd like to see us, if at all possible, to include the working poor -- the -- my center is in the Avondale Midway area and ninety-eight percent of my families are free and reduced lunch and one of the things that I've noticed is that most of the certificates I have are for families that are receiving some type of TANF assistance, but for high school teenagers with children or college students that are working and in college and for families that are part of the working poor that haven't been able to receive certificates. So, that's one thing that I'd like to see.

The other thing, at one point when I started child care thirteen years ago and I haven't been in child care as long as a lot of people in the area but one of the things that I thought was very beneficial was the STARS program. When consultants came out and they felt like the centers were not doing what they needed to do, then they would participate in what was called the STARS program at the time, and at the time it was held -- it was my understanding that it was held through quality care or quality assists and those centers would participate in like a support group and they would walk them through the policies and procedures and assist them in raising the standards of care within their centers, because one of the things that I see as a problem is that quality costs money and when you're in a center that ninety-eight percent of your families are free and reduced and you're not getting the competitive rate, it's very difficult to implement quality procedures.

When my consultant comes to me and says you need more mulch, Ms. Webb, on your playground, immediately I think five hundred dollars per playground and I have three and it's very hard for me to come across 15 hundred dollars in my budget to put mulch, to redo my fencing -- that's something else that I see, a lot of times centers have problems with in our area and that's fencing, mulch, just your basic health and safety things that costs money and I just don't see how we

can -- we just don't have the money to do it. But, one of the things I thought was beneficial thirteen years ago was the STARS program, because they would help with things like that.

## **NOR**

**BEVERLY YOUNG:** Beverly Young, B-E-V-E-R-L-Y, Y-O-U-N-G (spelling). I specifically agree with the part of the state-allowed current participants in the CAPS program to continue to receive child care for up to eight weeks due to the economy; I think it's very great for them to be able to participate in the CAPS program. So, I agree with this.

**DONA WINGO:** And one more question: if the child is in one program and would like to switch within a period their child to another program, can they do that in the middle of the two year?

## **RECERTIFICATION NOTIFICATION**

## **DEC**

**ARLESIA MCCULLOUGH:** My next comment has to do with notification of the recertification process, and I don't see this on there, but I think it's very important to speak at the forum here to state that there should be another form of notification other than one letter sent out by case workers, because, as Billie said, there are families that are eligible, but they are the working poor and they may not receive these one-notification letter, miss this recertification appointment and are taken completely off of the program. I had two families personally with two and three children that go to work every day, hard labor, low income, and was paying access fees and the service was just cut because she missed the appointment and did not get notification letters. So, I don't know if there should be a procedure where you can send out a certified letter were the parents can go and sign for it or a second follow-up letter, because -- and then they were put back on the waiting list, because funds weren't available, and they had to take those children out of our program on two occasions and it was not right, and they did not receive those notifications, and we as providers are not getting the notifications. Either all we see is what we're doing as far as -- once the names that are taken off of our maximum invoice and then you know that they are no longer eligible. So, that's something that needs to be looked at, the notification procedure. And also, if you are changing over to computers or whatever, you should consider the working poor or people who don't have Internet access. Thank you.

## **REDUCTION OF HOURS**

## **ALB**

**GERALD FIGGINS:** Hello. I am Gerald Figgins. G-E-R-A-L-D Figgins, F-I-G-G-I-N-S from Ninny's Day Care. I would like to ask several questions and so forth. Ms. Washington, forgive me, but I need to try to explain. I need more details and things here. The first portion or comment is around the 24 hours that you have got in the State plan. I will be the first one to commend the DHR for making that happen. I know I voiced loudly over a year ago to get it reduced, but it wasn't happening with the provider. So, I commend you for that.

My question is: You have got the plan to 24 hours, but how often does that happen? What does it really total to regarding individuals that get paid twice a month? I did the calculations and it is not 24 hours for people that work at like Call Tech and so forth. It is more than 24 hours that is required for them. And I feel for them for that. We got hit hard this past quarter with that.

Actually for people that work at Call Tech, it is like four weeks times 24, which is 96. Call Tech is 103.92 total hours. So, you have got 24 hours on the book here, but that is not true. It may actually change one day a little more or a little less within the last two months for that. Does that make sense?

One last thing. Because that needs to be spelled out. Simply, people will take their paycheck and divide it by four, four weeks. You can't do that. The night before you get through working at Call Tech -- They get paid twice a month and you have got to take the hourly amount and divide it by 4.33. That will give you the amount. That needs to be spelled out more in the plan. You also have to adjust and plan, too, around something regarding like 22 hours if your job has been reduced hour-wise. They are going to pay you for it, I guess, for 22 hours. I don't understand that one at all. There needs more detail about that. But if your hours are reduced and let's say if you work at the Red Lobster as a waitress and you reduce your hours down to 22 hours down that you are averaging a week, then supposedly your child care is to begin to be in full conflict between 22. There is going to be confusion right and left on that. And if there are 22, for those individuals that work at Call Tech, it is not 22 hours a week. It is more than 22 hours a week that they require or they will turn off the system. So, that needs to be cleared up.

**ALMA NOBLE:** That is like in determining, I see on this sheet where they are going to reduce the participation hours required from 30 to 24. Those decisions are made by DHR?

## **NOR**

**DONA WINGO:** My name is Dona Wingo, D-O-N-A, W-I-N-G-O (spelling). My only comment was, unfortunately, it was why they were reducing the hours of child care from 30 hours to 24 hours and I understand the leniency in the economy but those parents need that extra time. That really matters. They're not able to leave their jobs and unfortunately that's going to hurt those parents.

**TRACIE KING:** My name is Tracie King, T-R-A-C-I-E, K-I-N-G (spelling) and I hate to steal the works from the young lady who stepped up here first but I also agree with the change in hours. I have actually been laid off since August and I -- fortunately my children are grown. My son is in the Marines. He's in Iraq right now, but I feel for all those young women out there who have children that just -- I as a single mother just cannot even imagine what it must be like right now trying to provide daycare for your children and aren't able to do so, aren't able to find a job. So, I definitely agree -- with the hours changing that just -- that's just very difficult. So, I don't mean to be a copycat, but that's just the way I feel. Thank you.

## **RESOURCES**

## **AUG**

**MARY BOGAN:** My name is Mary Bogan, and I represent AfterCare Program at Southside, tutorial program. This program has been in effect for 14 plus years and we go through grades 1-12. And our problem is that we have parents' night, and usually at our parents' night it's much more than you would have at a PTO or whatever, and Ms. Washington has been with us for parent night. But our problem is I don't see readily how that the State can fix this other than through education, because the parents are concerned about the curriculum and how it's being taught at school. And when they come to us four hours a week with zero grades, and then for three months you see a change to A-B honor roll. And that seems to be a problem. And we try to steer our parents toward the Board of Education. And another problem we have is not a problem, is we abided by a low-mod

income in our program. We have 104 low, extremely low-mod, 72 low income, 12 low-low-moderate income to medium. But I still would like to have more resources because the kids that come in from say first through sixth grades, they usually come in at 5:30 and they ask for food. We do not have the resources to give the children food at the program. And we would like to receive more funds so we could move further with this. But I am very pleased that through Mrs. Washington that Southside and its community, the CSRA, has benefitted very much so with the children because they they come in with a behavior problem. They have attitudes. You know the works of all the children that come in, how they have behavior problems. But right now if you go and look at my bulletin board, I have a little girl that's been returning to me for maybe three years now. We could not get her to move, but all of a sudden with a counselor there -- we changed counselors and we talked to them -- she went from a D-F student to a straight A student. So I truly am asking this program here from the State to continue to supply our needs for our community. And Ms. Washington knows that she can come down and view what is going on at any given time, or all of you, any of you. We invite you. We're located at 1930 Olive Road in Augusta, Georgia.

## **DEC**

**BILLIE WEBB:** My other comment is -- and this may sound ugly, okay, but my feeling is, if people that weren't true to health and safety and meeting the minimum requirements were not in business, I wouldn't have a problem filling my center but I have a problem filling my center when I'm competing against centers where teachers are getting together to buy lunch for the kids that are in the building, then I'm having a problem competing filling my center. This year is the first year in eight years that I have been able to be at capacity and I'm at capacity. I'm at capacity but with everybody, as we all know, charge a fuel charge this year when the gas went up. Well, now the gas is down but the fuel charges are still there, so the costs of doing business in DeKalb has risen tremendously and it's like a losing battle trying to keep up with taxes with the rising costs of food, the rising costs of milk, and you want to offer your staff a competitive salary. So, I don't know what I'll do if Obama decides that he wants everybody to have health insurance and the private small business owner is going to contribute to that, it would just really be painful.

**BILLIE WEBB:** (2<sup>nd</sup> comment, same category) My other thought was, how about a satellite office. A satellite resource center that centers could come to dye, cut, laminate resource materials, technical assistance, and I know, well, what about our resource and referral agency that we have right now. It's sort of out of the way. It's not close to a lot of our centers that are in the ninety-eight percent free and reduced zone, and what I was thinking about was the extension services on Memorial Drive. If it were some way we could hook up with the extension services, because they just started them a new initiative where you can -- they have a DVD, you give it to your team members who are new to early childhood, they complete the workbook that talks about early childhood policies and best practices, they turn it into extension services and they get six hours of credit, and that will be starting on this career track that we all want them to participate in.

If there were some way with those resources we could participate in those resources, we could beef up the early childhood resources available at the extension services office, specifically for us, on Memorial Drive, where the County Extension Office is. If there is some way we could have a lending library or a child care center, materials that we could use for our parents. Have a person there that could offer some type of technical assistance, group meetings for the centers in the area that are working on quality improvement or NAEYC accreditation or whatever that is, but to have a central location where we can come to and use as a resource center, because right now it's sort of spread out. We're trying to go catch a bus to North Druid Hills to quality care, or beg for people at DeKalb County to let us use Jim Cherry, or going to the public library, or -- if you're not lucky enough as I am to be close to Covington -- that is a great library for children's materials --

then you're like out of luck. So if we could have a resource center that was more centrally located with materials that we could use to improve the quality of care in our centers, and some place that we could go and receive technical assistance. Thank you.

**AUDREY COLLIER:** Audrey Collier. My next comment is -- the family support resources coordinator -- coordination -- well, those providers who are Georgia pre-K providers who are lucky enough to have enough low-income families to receive funding for a resource coordinator, when you have a resource coordinator within your organization, that person is only allowed to work with those families who are enrolled in the pre-K program. I would love to see Georgia to invest more into hiring -- giving funding to hire resource coordinators who can work with families other than our pre-K families.

I also would like to see Georgia invest in non-traditional kinds of child care such as parents teachers, our Parent Leadership Institute. There are a lot of parents who may not work and they're not coming to our centers. They're at home with those babies zero to three and a parent teachers program really allows parent educator to go into a home and to work with that family, and bring resources and referrals, and give information to parents on transitioning into public school as well as giving them information on how to become leaders and advocates for their children. Thank you.

## **TANF PROGRAM PROCESS**

### **MAC**

**SHEMIKA BUSSEY:** Hello, my name is Shemika Bussey, S-H-E-M-I-K-A, B-U-S-S-E-Y (spelling), and I am actually a single parent, and I have my bachelor's degree in communications, but, you know, due to the way the economy has been going, I was laid off due to lack of work. Now, I'm not the type of person that would just love to be on government assistance, but I did have to go to the DHR office to file for food stamps and Medicaid to make sure that my daughter is taken care of and myself in the meantime.

Now, they offered the TANF program, which is something that I couldn't see myself doing because I'm educated enough. I know how to go out and look for a job. I know how to go walk in and ask for applications. I know how to go online and search for jobs. I know one of the requirements when I went to apply for TANF is that you had to go physically get 15 paper applications, which is -- I won't say it's obsolete in this day and age, but it's very rare that you go to a job -- I mean, I even went to Family Dollar and Pizza Hut because I'd rather be working than not working at all, and they tell me to go do it online.

Also with that, child care is really what I needed assistance with, but because -- I don't want to say I didn't want to go through the program, but I didn't feel it was necessary for me to -- I have a car. I have transportation. To have somebody pick me and my child up, take them to this meeting where I'm there basically all day learning stuff that I already know -- and that would be a waste of time -- and then after that, I go look for 15 jobs, which is a waste of time, a waste of the state's gas, because there are parents out there that really need that type of assistance that don't have transportation, and so I asked my caseworker, I was like well, if I wanted to go to the program, can I just drive my own car? And she was like, no. Now, I have a sister of mine that's going through a program through the DHS office and they don't allow any assistance with her. She has four kids to -- well, she has two younger kids that have to go to daycare. They provide her with daycare service but no transportation. So because I'm not working right now, I get up every morning and take her

kids to daycare and we find a way to get them in the afternoon, you know, just in case I ever get a job or whatever.

But I'm saying this to say the funds that are being used, I think there probably should be some type of program for people that don't want to be in the system, where you could allot them maybe a month or so to have child care to actually look for a job without going through the state and trying to get TANF funds that you really don't need. Because basically, you just want somebody to be able to watch the child until you can provide for your own daycare and, you know, have some type of limit for maybe, a month, two months or so at the most. I mean, if you are really looking for a job, I think you can find a job if you want. For me, that's been the case.

I have gotten two job offers now, but at the time when I was like, in the -- I don't know, in the stalemate place, I guess, of nobody calling me back, I had nowhere for my child to go because all of my other family members worked. I just wanted to say that about the TANF. That's about the TANF -- I mean, she agreed with me even though she's not really speaking, but I think it's relevant, because a lot of people want to work and don't want to be in the system and would prefer to have child care for at least a month or so until they can get on their feet. It's a lot easier.

And personally, unlike people -- I would not be in this -- not -- I mean, just in layman's terms, I just don't want them in my business like that, and I felt educated enough to get a job and get things taken care of. I mean, I did it before. I was working at Geico and I paid my own insurance. It's a lot easier to work, pay your own insurance, be done with it. You don't have to report in. You don't have to worry about if you make too many hours, it's going get cut off and, you know. But for funds that are available to people, I think they should help people get to -- get their kids to and from the daycare and also help parents that don't want to receive TANF money, don't want any money, just child care for a couple months. That's all. I don't know if you agree with me or not.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **DEC**

**BILLIE WEBB:** My other comment is about continuing education. I feel that the early childhood industry in Georgia is predominately female. Our pay is very low but I don't see steps being taken for those people that have been in the industry ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years. They're taking their obligatory ten hours and at the end of ten years of taking ten hours they don't have anything, and I think that they should have something, some kind of way we need to beef up the training systems, so that at the end of ten years, if a person has taken ten hours every year for ten years, they need to have a certificate or something other than a high school diploma, because if they want to move on to health care or if they want to move into the public school system, they need to have something that they can move on with, so that we can establish a true career ladder for our team members, because we have women who have been working in this field for years and all they have are these pieces of paper. No certificate of completion from a technical school, no Associate's Degree anything, and there are other states that do have some type of guidelines, so that at the end of ten years working in early childhood you walk away with something, and we need to think about our team members in this field. I think that's it for me. If I think of anything else I'll send you an email. Thank you.

**AUDREY COLLIER:** I also agree on the staff training and staff development. If child care is a continuing -- we are to continue to be professionals, then we have to invest in our staff. We're not babysitters, we're not daycare centers, we are child care and early education programs, but if we let the state use some of your dollars to educate our staff so we can pay benefits, so we can provide

education, so we can send our staff back to school, so our parents will be happy, because nowadays parents are really, really interested in their children being in programs that can really prepare them for school.

There is so much pressure among children to pass all these test, but we don't really do tests at the early care and education; we do a lot of assessment, but if we had the dollars to educate our staff, to understand staffing, to understand evaluation and all those things that go on in early child care and education, then I think our programs will be much better. But I've not had an opportunity to read the State Plan. I will take an opportunity to do that. I'll download it. But we just want to encourage you all to please spread these dollars out equally, because a lot of child care centers are closing and we don't want to see that happen. Some people aren't able to go to programs like Scottsdale that are recently accredited. They may have chosen other programs, but those programs are really struggling, as well as programs such as Scottsdale. So please, if you can just continue to support us through CAPS, direct contract, through a lot of training for our child care providers. Thank you.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **ALB**

**ALMA NOBLE:** I don't know what things they allow, but I think originally when that formula was calculated, and I have been told back years and years ago, cars were not necessary. You know, they might not have been a necessity. But today where jobs are available in this area, public transportation is not available for parents. If you had to be at the nursing home at 5:00 or 6:00 o'clock, public transportation is not available. We have lots of jobs down in Camilla, Moultrie, Dawson, but people need cars to get there. So, if you calculate by wages and you say, "I have a disposable income of six-hundred dollars" but if you didn't include the two or three hundred dollar car note, which is almost an essential, and you did not allow anything as far as insurance. So I have confidence in people and toot my little horn and say if you just do a basic -- I know that you can't pay everybody's full car note, but if something would be allowed for transportation, even if it is a flat rate of two hundred dollars, but something so that we wouldn't have the discrepancy between, quote, "income" and "real income."

And that has been a big problem. It is just a problem for parents because, you know, even though the way your child's school -- The way our schools are so far away in Albany, it is going to make a lot of parents even not get to check on their children. So, I guess my main point is that transportation is essential in 2009. It is not an option, you know. And if people are going to become self-sufficient and work, they have to have means of getting to work. And I would just like to see somehow car payments and a flat amount just included in how they determine what funds a family really has. Because right now, it is a false positive. Those funds are not really there.

Like I said, I don't know if this is the group who would help determine or work out that formula or not, but you know, that is a concern. And when will these proposed changes go into effect if they are approved? When will be their implementation? If these plans are approved and budget completed and all of the State hearings, when do they actually go into effect? Are you all going to have those answers?